

A
SERMON
Preached before the
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WHITE-HALL
O N

Christmas-Day, 1682.

By *N. STRATFORD, D. D.*
and *Dean of St. ASAPH.*

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A
SERMON
 ON
ROMANS viii. 3.

—*God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.*

Since the Design of this Solemn Assembly, is with all Thankfulness to commemorate the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord: What can be more proper to entertain our Devotion, than the contemplation of the great end, for which he was Incarnate? Which however grossly mistaken, by those who are resolved, not to understand it; is plainly enough expressed

pressed in the words now read ; To be the setting us free from the Bondage of Sin, and the making us partakers of his Holiness. A matter of such Grand Importance, in the Judgment of the *only wise God*, that he thought it worth the *sending his own Son* into the world, after he had attempted it by other means without success. *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh* ; When mens fleshly Lusts were so strong and impetuous, that the Law of it self, was unable to subdue them, and to advance Mankind to that real inward Purity, of which all the outward Purifications prescribed by the Law were but shadows ; as a more powerful efficacious means, in order to this great end, God out of his infinite Compassion to lost man, *sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh*, &c.

As preparatory to the ensuing Discourse, 'tis needful only to acquaint you ; That by the words, *πριν ουρανιας*, (translated *for sin*) is meant a Sacrifice for sin : That being the Notion most agreeable to the Scope of the Text ; and that in which they are frequently used, both by the Septuagint, and our Apostle.

That

That to *condemn sin*, is not barely to pass Sentence against it ; but to punish and to destroy it. That God is said to *condemn sin in the flesh*, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a sacrifice for it ; Because he most dreadfully punished it, in the flesh of his Son ; and hath thereby taken the most effectual course, to destroy it in our flesh : as he is said in Holy Scripture to do those things, for the effecting of which, he contributes sufficient means : so that nothing is wanting on his part, for the doing of them.

Which being Premised, the words are naturally resolved into these five Propositions.

- I. *That God sent his own Son into the world.*
- II. *That God sent his own Son into the world in flesh.*
- III. *That he sent him into the World, in the likeness of sinful flesh.*
- IV. *That he sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a sacrifice for Sin.*
- V. *That God by sending his own Son into the World, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a Sacrifice for Sin ; hath taken the most effectual course for the Destroying of Sin in us.*

I. *I. God sent his Son.* Not his Son by Creation, as Adam; nor by Adoption, as all good men are: Not his Son, only as invested with some part of his Authority, and commissionated by him to some eminent Office, as all Princes are: But his *Own Son* (as he is here emphatically call'd) the Son of his own Nature, begotten by him before all Worlds, who is very God of very God, of one substance with the Father himself. And therefore his *only begotten Son* too; such as no other person in the World, is, ever was, or shall be.

And in proportion to the peculiar, and transcendent Excellency of his Sonship, was his Father's Love towards him; for being his *only begotten*, he was above all others his *beloved Son*; as he himself testified, by an express voice from Heaven, saying; *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*

And the greater God's Love was to Him, so much the more was it expressed to Us, to whom *alone* he sent him. For he sent him not to the Apostate Angels, to expiate their sins, and to avert the stroak of his vengeance from them; but leaving them under

under an irreversible Doom, to be reserv'd to Chains of Darkness at the judgment of Jude v. 6. the Great Day ; He sent him to us Men, who are by Nature inferiour to the Angels, and were become confederate with them in their Rebellion against him ; who were not only without Strength, to resist his Justice ; but too obstinate to implore his Mercy.

This is intimated in the Text; For in that God sent him, *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, 'tis also implyed that he sent him to *sinful flesh* : To the Sons of Men, *who had all sinned, and were fallen short of the Glory of God.* Rom. iii. 23. And is plainly expressed in other Scriptures, in which we are told ; That *God sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.* That *in this was manifest the Love of God toward Us, that God sent his only begotten Son, that We might live through him.* His Love was indeed manifest toward Us, his Severity toward the Angels ; in that while he left them to fall a Sacrifice to his Justice, he sent his *belov-ed Son, to be Himself a Sacrifice in Our room.*

II. But because the only Son of God, as he is born of God, is infinitely exalted, above the reach of Suffering, and by consequence of Dying ; That therefore he might be qualified to become a Sacrifice for us ; *God sent him into the World in flesh* ; (which is the second Proposition) Not in the Likeness, (as some ancient Hereticks phancied) but in the Truth and Reality of flesh.

John 1. 14. *The Word was made flesh* (says St. John ;) Tho' begotten of the Father, and not made ; that he might become Sin for us, he was made flesh. He that from the Beginning was in the World in the Form of God, in the Fulness of time, was sent into the World, in the Nature of Man ; that as the Son of Man he might suffer and die ; as the Son of God, might conquer Death, and give that Value to his sufferings, which might make them a Compleat satisfaction to Divine Justice.

And that he took upon him the Humane Nature, and in the Nature he assumed, remaining still the same Person, came into the World a True Man (which is the common

mon Notion of the Word flesh, in the Language of the Hebrews, and that in which it is alwaies used when applyed to the Son of God) we need no other proof, than his Own words to the Jews; *Now* (saith he) *Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the Truth.* Nor doth he only entitle Himself, Man, but more frequently the Son of Man, which shews him to have been of Humane Extraction, and by necessary consequence of the same Nature. If we desire to know his Pedigree, we need look no further than the Gospel of St. Luke, who hath deriv'd it as far backward, as from the common Father of Mankind. And because God had promised to *Abraham*, that *in his seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*; in correspondence to this Promise, among all the Sons of *Adam*, he might have made choice of, he took the seed of *Abraham*. And as God afterward *swore with an Oath unto David*, *that of the fruit of his loins, he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne*; so we are assured, that he *was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*; and the Evangelists tell us in particular, what Daughter of the House of *David*

Gen. xxii. 18.

Heb. ii. 16.

Act. ii. 30.

Rom. 1. 3.

David it was, who was so highly favoured by God, as to be made his Mother.

But had he as *Melchisedech*, been represented in Holy Scripture, as without Father and without Mother too ; yet who can call in question the Truth of his Humanity, who considers, that he had a Body of the same substance with our Own ? For because the *Children were partakers of flesh and blood*, he also himself took part of the same (as the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us) the Reality of which, his Adversaries were sufficiently confident of, who made long Furrows upon his back, and pierced his hands and his feet ; And that his Body was animated by a Soul, that demonstrated it self to be truly Humane, by all those Acts and Faculties ; that are the inseparable Properties of such a Soul.

In brief : so wonderful was the Father's Love, and the Sons condescension ; that he became not only a Man ; but in the common account of the World, a man of the meanest Birth and Quality, (for the Family of *David* was then obscure) He made himself of no Reputation, lessened himself into the

the form of a Servant : and therefore might truly call himself the *Son of Man*, as that expression among the Hebrews, peculiarly signified, a Man of low Degree, that hath nothing in outward appearance that may command esteem ; but is barely a Man, and no more. He was made flesh in the more humble sense of the word, as it is put for weakness and Frailty, for that which is vile and contemptible ; being made subject to those abasing, sinless Infirmities, to which the most despicable of the Sons of men are. As will be manifest in speaking to the next Proposition.

III. *That God sent his Son into the World in the likeness of sinful flesh* ; in the Shape and Appearance of a Sinner. And that upon these three Accounts, especially

1. Because he sent him Subject to all the same Natural Infirmities, that Sinners are. I say Natural, on purpose to distinguish them from such as are Personal ; for though he did not take upon himself those Infirmities, by which one man differs from another ; yet he became obnoxious to all those,

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2a. llii. 3.

that adhere to the Humane Nature, and so are common to the whole Race of Mankind. Whether they be such, as follow the Nature of a frail mortal Body ; as Hunger, Thirst, Weariness; Pain, yea, Death it self ; or such as attend the Souls of other Men ; as Sorrow, Fear, Amazement. So great, so many, so continual were his sorrows, that the Prophet calls him, *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs.* Now although these Infirmitiess are not in themselves sins, and therefore the Son of God took upon him a Humane Nature subject to them ; yet because most of those before mentioned, are in all other Men the Fruits and Punishments of sin ; therefore by submitting to them, he took upon himself the Liability of a Sinner.

2. Because God sent him into the World under the Law. *When the fulness of time was come* (saith the Apostle) *God sent forth his Son made of a Woman, made under the Law.* That he was under the Law as to its Curse, and suffered the Penalty due to a Sinner, will afterward appear. That which I now intend is, that he was made subject to the Com.

Commands; not of the Moral only, but of the Ceremonial Law, which supposed sin in those who were obliged to the Observation of them. He was Circumcised the Eighth day, which was the reputed Badge of a Sinner, as supposing some Impurities of the flesh that were to be cut off. Tho' he was the *Lamb of God that took away the sins of the World* ; Yet he eat the Paschal Lamb together with his Disciples ; as if he himself had stood in need of an Expiatory Sacrifice. Thus by submitting to such Rites, as imply'd sin in the Observers of them ; he seem'd to be of the same sinful mould and Constitution with other Men. But

3. And especially, God sent him *in the likeness of sinful flesh* ; because he sent him to be Treated as a Sinner. *He made him to be sin for us* ; to be reckoned, and dealt with, as one guilty of the blackest Enormities. He was accused of the Highest Impieties towards God, of the Grosset Injustice toward Men, of the foulest Intemperance in respect of Himself. So Monstrous a sinner was he deem'd, by those who were the Legal Judges in such Cases, that a Robber and a

Murderer when compared with Him, were reputed Innocent. He was accordingly condemned to Death, by the sentence of the Supream Magistrate ; and to such a Death, as none but the very scum and Reproach of Mankind were ever put to. And yet as if that Opprobrious Death, had been too little to represent to the World, how vile a Malefactor they thought him, to aggravate the shame and Torment of it they added all manner of Indignities, by which they were able to express, their utmost Scorn and Detestation of him.

Ma. iii. 12. Thus the Son of God, (as was long before prophesied) *was numbed with the Transgressors*; was treated as an infamous Person while he lived; and as such was cut off from the Land of the Living. And all this was done by *the determinate Counsel and fore-knowledge of God* (as St. Peter tells us.) And we cannot easily imagine, how God could contrive more Effectually, to set forth his Son in the ugly Dress of a sinner, than by exposing him to all the most abhor'd and Reproachful usages, that the worst of sinners are ever expos'd to.

But

But tho' in these Respects, he was like to sinful flesh ; yet he was only Like, and not indeed such : but perfectly Innocent, and perfectly Righteous : As is evident by Scripture, and by Reason too.

1. By Scripture ; which testifies, that in him was no sin ; but that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And therefore when it speaks of his Universal likeness to us, 'tis with this Limitation, *He was in all points tempted like unto us, yet without Sin.*

He could derive no stain from *Adam*, because he was Miraculously conceived of a Virgin, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost : And therefore the Angel *Gabriel*, to signify the immaculate Purity of his Humane Nature, calls him, *That Holy thing*, by way of eminency.

Nor was he only exempt from that Pollution, which necessarily descends to all other men by Natural Generation ; but he never contracted any himself. Whereas there is nothing, in which Persons are more apt to sin, than in speech ; and therefore St. James tells us, *That if any man offend not in* Jam. iii. 2.

in Word; the same is a perfect Man; he never offended this way; for there was no guile found in his Mouth; Which the Apostle mentions in particular, to vindicate his Innocency, from the malicious Calumnies of the *Jews;* who accused and condemned him, as a false Prophet, and a Blasphemer.

1 Pet. ii. 22. And no wonder, that no sin ever proceeded out of his Mouth; since none ever enter'd into his Heart. For when *the Prince of this World came to him, he found nothing in him.* Not so much as an evil Thought, to take part with any of his Temptations. This his unspotted Purity, was foretold by the Prophets long before; and represented by those Sacrifices that were Types of him.

Joh. xiv. 30. And great Reason there was in the second place; That he should be absolutely free from sin. For had he not been a Lamb without Blemish, he had not been fit for a Sacrifice. Had he had sin Himself, he had not been in a capacity of making satisfaction for the sins of others: And therefore the Apostle tells us, *that it became us;* 'twas not only meet, but necessary; that *we should have an High Priest,* who needed not to offer *Sacrifices,*

ees, first for his own sins ; for had he needed that, he could not have offered a meritorious Sacrifice for Ours. That therefore he might be qualified, to make such a Sacrifice for us, that might be *a sweet smelling savour* ; 'twas needful, that he Himself should be Holy, and without Blemish.

And yet there was great Reason, why (though perfectly pure from sin) he should be sent into the World, in the *Likeness* of a Sinner. And that

1. That he might by his own Example, more powerfully teach us, to deny our Credit, when it stands in Competition with our Duty ; to be content to be reputed vile persons, rather than make our selves really such. This is a piece of self-denial, in which Good men do commonly meet with the greatest Difficulty : For the more ingenuous any Persons are, at so much the higher rate do they value their good Name ; and therefore are never in greater danger of being drawn to the Commission of sin, than when they shall be looked upon as Sinners, for not committing it. That therefore we might be the better fortified against this

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dangerous Temptation, God was pleased to send his own Son into the World, to be treated as a sinner ; that looking to Him, the Captain of our Salvation, we may follow him with an Undaunted Courage and Resolution, through *Honour and Dishonour* ; through *Evil Report, and good Report*. That we may be willing to Sacrifice, not only our Lives ; but (which is more) our Reputation too, rather than do any thing misbecoming our Holy Profession. This is

1 Pet. ii. 19, 20,
21, 22.
that to which St. Peter tells us, we are called by God, and that upon this very Account : *because Christ also hath suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his steps.* And this is no more, than what the Primitive Christians, had daily Trials of ; and which animated by so great an Example, they most cheerfully endur'd.

2. That he might the more Effectually recommend to our Affection and Practise, all other the most excellent Christian Graces : such as Charity, Humility, Meekness, Obedience to our Governours, intire submission to the Divine Will, in suffering, as well as doing : All which were most lively

ly expressed, and most powerfully recommended to our Imitation, by his coming into the World, and Living and Dying, *in the likeness of sinful flesh.*

And what can be of greater force, for the begetting and promoting the same in our selves? How can he be Proud, who sets before his Eyes, the Unparallel Humanity of the Lord of Glory? How can he fret and fume at every little neglect; who considers his immoveable Patience, under the most Contumelious and Despightful usage? How can he despise Dominions, and speak evil of Dignities; who remembers, that he was Dumb, and opened not his Mouth, when the most unjust sentence was pronounced against him? But

3. And especially God sent him into the World *in the likeness of sinful flesh*; because he sent him to be put into the place and room of sinners; to make full satisfaction for their Offences, by suffering the shame, as well as the Pain, that was due to them; which leads to the fourth Proposition.

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IV. *That God sent his own Son into the World, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a Sacrifice for Sin.* Tho' this was not the only, yet it was one prime end for which he sent him ; and therefore it was no more than what was expedient, that he should be represented to the World, in the quality of a Sinner.

That his Father gave it him in charge to lay down his Life for us, we learn from his own Mouth ; for therefore saith he, doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again : this Commandment have I received from my Father. So much was this in the Fathers design, that long before he sent him, he plainly signified by his Holy Prophets, that he should not only suffer and die ; but that in his Death, his Soul should be made *an Offering for sin.* Yea no sooner was man become a Sinner, but he gave intimation of it, in the Promise to *Adam* ; and in those bloody Sacrifices, which by his own Institution, were offered by Sinners, and accepted by Himself in their room.

In humble Obedience to this Command which his Father gave him, and in correspondence

spondence to these Predictions ; he voluntarily offered himself to a violent and cruel death : *For knowing all things that should come upon him*, he went to the place, whither a band of Souldiers and Officers, were sent to apprehend him ; and after he had given them to understand how easily he could baffle all their attempts, in case he had a mind to resist them (by striking them down to the ground with a word of his mouth) he gave himself up into their hands ; who forthwith led him away bound to those, whose Malice he knew was so implacable, that it would be satisfyed with nothing less than his Blood ; and by their instigation he was condemn'd to Death (after the Judge had again and again acquitted him) and by wicked hands was crucified and slain. And that he might exactly answer those Sacrifices under the Law, by which his was most eminently prefigur'd ; he not only pour'd out his Soul unto Death, but he also suffer'd without the gate of the City : like as the *bodies of those Beasts, whose blood was brought by the High Priest into the Sanctuary, were burnt without the Camp.* Heb. xiv. 11,
12.

Thus he freely gave himself an Offering and a Sacrifice to God. And that he gave himself for us, to make expiation for our Guilts, we are as infallibly assur'd by the word of Truth ; which expressly affirms : *That he was delivered for Our offences ; that he was wounded for our Transgressions, was bruised for our Iniquities ; that the chastisement of our Peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed : That he hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us : That we have Redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.* In which words, we have not only the persons for whom he dyed, but one blessed fruit of his meritorious Sacrifice, in all those who truly repent, and turn from their Iniquities, *viz.* the forgiveness of sins : *For if the blood of Bulls, and of Goats, and the ashes of an Heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit, offer'd himself without spot to God, purge our Consciences from dead works ?*

This (I say) is one fruit of his Sacrifice, *1 Pet. ii. 24.* for this is not all. *He bare our sins in his own body*

body upon the Tree, to the end that we being dead unto Sin, might live unto God. He therefore died for our Sins, that we might die to them. Our deliverance from the Punishment of sin, was design'd by God, in order to our deliverance from the Power of it ; that sin might no longer reign in our mortal Body, that we should obey it in the Lusts thereof; but that being made free from sin, we might become the Servants of Righteousness : This was that which God principally aimed at, and at the other only as a Motive to it. Which brings me to the last thing observable in the words.

V. *That God by sending his own Son into the World, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a Sacrifice for sin, hath taken the most effectual course for the Destruction of sin in us.* For the purifying of our Hearts, and reforming our Lives ; that we may not live the rest of our time in the flesh, to the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God.

When the highest Attainments of the Heathen Moralists, were to this purpose so unavailable, that their own Precepts were

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a constant reproach to their Practise ; When the Law of *Moses* was so weak and unprofitable, that the precise Pharisee, (notwithstanding his Zeal for the observance of it) was as great a slave to the sins of the Spirit, as the prophanie Publican was to those of the Flesh ; When all those Purgatives of Humane Nature, which the wisest men both of the *Jewish* and *Gentile* World, did most admire and applaud, were of so little force to the end for which they were prescribed ; that the whole World was overgrown with wickedness : For the Mortification of sin, when all other ways proved so ineffectual, that it daily improv'd under them ; God at length sent his only Son into the World, to die upon a Crois for it : Which however it is to the *Jews* a stumbling block, and was at the first, to the *Greeks*, foolishness ; Yet to them that are call'd, (who heartily believe it) both *Jews* and *Greeks*, 'tis the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God : The Power of God unto Salvation ; unto that great Salvation, which God primarily design'd for us ; the saving us from sin : The Wisdom of God ; It being incomparably above all other the

the most advantagious course, that the wisdom of God ever contriv'd for the abolishing of it : Both as it affords the most powerful Motives, to quicken our endeavours to it ; and as it gives us the most powerful Assistance, by which we may be enabled to effect it. It affords the most powerful Motives to excite our endeavours to it.

1. As it is a most palpable demonstration of God's infinite Abhorrency of sin, of his implacable Wrath and inexorable severity against it, and of that intolerable Damnation, that all those will unavoidably incur, who shall notwithstanding persevere in the practise of it.

God had before taught Mankind by many sensible Experiments, that sin was *an evil, and a bitter thing* : But never was his wrath so dreadfully reveal'd from Heaven against it, as in delivering up his own Son, to be an expiatory Sacrifice for it. The Destruction of a World at once (eight persons only excepted) was in comparison but a slight expression of his vengeance : For by how much more valuable, the single Life of his beloved Son was, than that of the whole

whole VWorld of Sinners, by so much the more in his Death, did the Indignation of God against sin appear. The destroying of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* by a Fire as strange as their Lusts ; what was it, to the flaming out of his wrath against him, who was as dear to him as himself ? For the greater the Love of God was to him, so much the more was his Hatred of sin thereby declared. Should we ascend as high as Heaven, or descend as low as Hell ; neither the Angels thrown down from above, nor the dismal Groans of the Souls beneath, can so loudly proclaim God's detestation of sin, as *the strong cryes and tears, the bloody sweat and agony of his Son did.* No Parallel can be found for it, no Example that falls not as far below it, as the Creature below the Creator.

And since God was so severe in his In-
flictions upon his only Son, can we ima-
gine that he will spare us, if in contempt
and defiance of his Justice, we shall still
harden our selves in Rebellion against him ?
If he so dreadfully vindicated the Honour
and Authority of his Laws, on him who
had

had never transgred'd the least of them Himself, but out of his immense Charity only interpos'd for those that had ; Can any man be so sottish, as to flatter himself with hopes of Impunity, incase he still continues in the wilful Violation of them ?

For tho 'tis true, Christ gave himself a Ransom for all men, the most daring sinner in the World not excepted ; Yet 'twas upon condition only of their sincere Repentance, that they were to receive the benefits of his Ransom : None shall ever be made Partakers of the Blessed Fruits of his Cross (the Pardon of their sins and Reconciliation with God) who do not themselves *crucifie the flesh with its affections and lusts* : For those who still cherish them, and make Provision for them, nothing remains, *but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation to devour them.* For if the word spoken by *An-* Heb. ii. 2, 3. *gels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence of reward ; how shall we escape, if we despise so great Salvation ?* There is no possibility of their escape from the Damnation of Hell in the other World, who refuse to be delivered from

their sins in this World. *And who can dwell with devouring Fire? Who can dwell with Everlasting burnings?* 'Tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a Revenging God, whose Power is equal to his Justice, and who lives for ever to take Vengeance; 'Twas ever a fearful thing, but 'twill be now more, especially so to those who cleave to their sins, after God hath so fully discovered how intolerably odious they are to him. This will be their Condemnation, (their Condemnation with a Witness) that they still persist in their sins, notwithstanding God hath so plainly made known, how infinitely dear they shall pay for them.

Nor is the Consideration of Christ's Death, as a Sacrifice for sin, more powerful to drive and affright us from it, as 'tis the most evident Demonstration of God's unappeasable Wrath against sin; than 'tis to attract and allure us to Holiness. As 'tis

2. An unparallel Expression of his Love and kindness to sinners; of his exceeding readiness to pardon them upon their sincere Repentance; and to make them everlastingly happy.

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It would have argu'd great Clemency in the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, had he but given us leave to have petition'd him for Mercy. But though he resolv'd to prevent us by his Grace, and while we were yet sinners and obnoxious to his Vengeance, to make offers of Reconciliation to us ; had it not been enough to have sent them, by one of the meanest of those ministring Spirits, that continually attend upon him ? But if he would love us so much, who so much deserv'd his Hatred, as to send his only Son out of his own bosom to us ; Who could have imagin'd, but he would have sent him aray'd with Light, shining with such amazing Glory and Majesty, as might have given the World to understand the supereminent Dignity of his Person : But to send him in *Flesh*, and which is yet more vile in the likeness of *sinful flesh*, that in that odious disguise he might deliver him up to the most accursed Death, to purchase a pardon for us Miscreants with his own most precious Blood. *What manner of Love* was this ? Well might St. John say, *Herein is Love*. You will say perhaps, and in what not ?

Since the love of God is plainly legible in all his works. True, but *herein is love* so transcendent, that all the love shew'd to Mankind in the works of Creation, and common Providence deserves not to be named, when compared with it. Even our Blessed Saviour himself, as if unable to express it, speaks of it with admiration. *So God loved the World !* So inexpressibly, so inconceivably.

And is it possible, after such a stupendous Testimony of God's love to sinners; that the greatest sinner in the VWorld should so much as question his readiness to pardon him, upon his sincere Repentance ? Has God given his only Son to die for us, to the end that he may be *just*, and yet the *justifyer of him that believeth in Jesus* ? And now that all the demands of his Justice are fully satisfyed, shall he not much more give us a Pardon ? What can hinder ? When even Justice it self is now become an Advocate for sinners, and pleads for Mercy. And *if we confess our sins*, not that he is *merciful*, but *he is just to forgive us our sins*. Let therefore the Wicked forsake his

¹ John i. 9.

² 16. iv. 7.

his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Tho' his sins be as scarlet, they Isa. i. 18. shall be as white as snow ; tho' they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

And can there be a more potent Motive to Repentance ? Unless it be that God will not barely pardon, but for the redundant Merit of this all-sufficient Sacrifice, will also advance us to a more glorious and happy state, than that which by sin we lost. What Rebel would not relent and return to Loyalty ; were he unquestionably assur'd that his Prince would be so far from punishing him, that he would on the contrary promote him to the highest Honours ? Such an assurance has God given to all truly penitent Sinners ; that he will not only *be merciful to their unrighteousness, and remember their sins and iniquities no more* ; but will take them into his bosom, treat them as his Favourites ; Yea, make them Co-heirs together with his Son, of his own everlasting Kingdom and Glory.

And can the most resolute sinner in the World be so obstinate, as not to be overcome, and yield himself a Captive to such Love ? And if we are once brought under the Power of Divine Love ; this alone will raise and unite all the Forces of our Souls against our sins, and make us cry out with as much vehemency against them, as the *Jews* did against our Saviour , *Crucifie them, Crucifie them* ; Let not one of them escape alive, and let those above all the rest be put to a reproachful Death, that we have formerly been most enchanted and led Captive by.

If besides these mighty Motives, (which one would think were sufficient, to give strength to the weakest ; and to raise them to the Life of God, who are quite dead in Sins and Trespasses) any thing further can be needful to this purpose. Consider,

3. That God (as the Purchase of this meritorious Sacrifice) hath also sent his Holy Spirit to assist our Endeavours ; to raise and renew our Faculties, and to strengthen us with that might in the inner man, by which we may be enabled to get the

the Victory over our strongest and most imperious inordinate Lusts : For certainly the most domineering and prevailing sin, hath not gotten such absolute Dominion over us, but by the assistance of this Almighty Spirit, we may be set free from the Bondage of it.

We can scarce imagine any persons more under the Power of vile Affections, than those spoken of, *1 Corinth. vi. 9, 10.* And yet how deeply soever they were sunk into the Mire, the Apostle tells us, *v. 11.* that they were *washed*, that they were *sanctified*, that they were *justified*, *in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* In the early ages of the Gospel, so common, and so apparent were the Effects of the Divine Graces, in reforming the most outrageously vicious persons, that they were matter of great Boasting and Triumph to the Primitive Christians.

And God be thanked, our own Age is not destitute of some famous Instances of this Nature : And that we meet not with many more; 'tis not to be imputed to Gods backwardness to give; but to our unwillingness

lingness to receive his Holy Spirit ; and to that Rude and Churlish entertainment we give him, when he makes his visits to us. Did we but readily comply with his Motions, and yield our selves up to be led by them ; we should soon find it not only possible, but easie ; Yea, the most pleasant and delightful thing in the World, to deny all Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World : Looking for the blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

F I N I S.

